

INTERSECTIONAL ASSIMILATION AND THE ETHNIC IDENTITIES OF LATINOS/AS

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ABSTRACT

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Identification with an ethnic group means belonging to a group, having a collective consciousness, adhering to their values, norms, and attitudes (Deaux, 2006; Feliciano, 2009; Markus 2010). Thus, I specifically address how assimilation theories address the ethnic identity formation of Latinas/os but fall short by disregarding the significance of gender. I propose an intersectional assimilation theory by focusing on an intersectional and gender framework. Using data from the 2004 Immigrant and Intergenerational Mobility Metropolitan Los Angeles, I examined the likelihood of Latinas/os' ethnic identities. Overall, there are conflicting findings on the effects of gender and assimilative proxies but it suggests that Latinas/os have differing ethnic identities because of their geographical location and social location within structures of inequality of race, ethnicity, gender, class, citizenship, age, and language.

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INTRODUCTION

Latinas/os¹ have a unique racial and ethnic experience in the U.S. in that they are not easily racially or ethnically classified (Tienda and Mitchell, 2006). Foremost, the pan-ethnic identity of Latino/a is not a common racial or ethnic label in Latin America (Golash-Boza and Darity, 2008). Espiritu (1992) states, “Panethnicity —the generalization of solidarity among ethnic subgroups— is largely a product of categorization” (p.6). Rather, the U.S. government has institutionalized the use of an ethnic identity and constructed a group that homogenizes peoples varying nationalities, religions and languages from Latin American, the Caribbean and Spain. And yet, the U.S. Census Bureau has maintained Latina/o or Hispanic as an ethnicity. As a result, Latinas/os choose one or more races which in the 2010 Census consisted of the categories of American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Black/African-American, White, and some other race. However, the racial categorizations are constantly changing every decennial Census and thus, shape how Latinas/os identify racially and ethnically.

While macro-level institutions structure the categories of Latinas/os identities, micro-level interactions and experiences also contribute to our understanding of self (Delgado, 2010; Feliciano, 2009; Markus 2010; Nagel, 1994; Newby and Dowling, 2007; Rumbaut, 2009; Tovar and Feliciano, 2009; Trieu 2009). In particular, the social psychological perspective affirms this dialectic process of identity formation as affected by individual self-identification and outsiders’ ethnic designations (Nagel, 1994). These processes address how boundaries of inclusion or exclusion among social groups are constructed and social positions established (Newby and Dowling, 2007). Furthermore, these processes exemplify the fluidity of identity and underlie its

¹ Even though the term Latina/o homogenizes the experiences of people from various Latin American countries and regions, I will be using the term to refer to people with ancestry to one or more of the 20 Spanish speaking countries in Latin American, the Caribbean and Spain.

dynamic and constantly changing nature. Given these complexities of identity formation and the institutionalization of Latinas/os as a panethnicity, I will examine how Latina/o immigrant families² ethnically³ self-identify.

² Latino immigrant families refers to families whose parents have migrated to the U.S., brought their children before they were 12 years old, born in the U.S., or third generation Latinos whose grandparents migrated to the U.S.

³ Ethnicity is defined as a national identity of a group that shares a common language, religion, customs, ancestry, diet and/or lifestyle (Snipp, 2010: 108).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ethnic identities are complex, dynamic, and constantly changing according to contexts and experiences (Feliciano, 2009; Markus, 2010; Nagel, 1994; Phinney, 1990; Rumbaut, 2009; Trieu, 2009). Recognizing the complexity of ethnic identities, Rumbaut (1994) has developed four types of ethnic self-labels: American identity, panethnic identity, hyphenated-American identity, and national origin identity. Rumbaut (1994) conceptualized American and panethnic identity as “made in the U.S. identities” while hyphenated-American and national origin identities reflect immigrant experience. The varied meanings of these identities may illustrate the experiences of Latinas/os.

An American identity can reveal that such a person believes that he/she is American, has access to opportunities and privileges and is treated by others as American. Individuals who choose to identify as American, seem to have been able to discard their ethnic roots and become part of the American mainstream (Trieu, 2009). Thus, using an American identity reflects feelings of inclusion and acceptance (Golash-Boza, 2006; Rumbaut, 1994; Tafoya, 2004; Vasquez, 2010). Whereas, the Hispanic/Latino identity was created as a panethnic label and implemented by the U.S. Census Bureau in 1976 to categorize people of Spanish origin and Latin American population (Deaux 2006; Portes and MacLeod, 1996; Tienda and Mitchell 2005). Interestingly, even when the label was socially constructed as a statistical term, it has come to be accepted and internalized by many (Portes and MacLeod, 1996). And yet, this ethnic identity has also been transformed and become a label that symbolizes a minority group status and furthermore, non-Americanness (Rumbaut 2009; Tienda and Mitchell, 2006).

In contrast, Rumbaut (1994) conceptualized hyphenated-American identities as identifying with immigrant experience and original homeland but bridging it with the U.S. As a

result, those that adopt a hyphenated-American identity are more likely to see themselves as belonging to two compatible and integrated cultures (Deaux, 2006). Furthermore, studies have found that this identity is viewed as self-selected in that if groups are privileged, they use this identity to maintain their roots or to disassociate from stereotyped groups (Feliciano, 2009; Gans, 1979). Lastly, national origin identity also may reveal a connection with an original homeland. Portes and MacLeod (1996) elucidate that “Nationalities were created in America for peasant newcomers whose original identities and loyalties did not go much beyond their local villages” (p.524). Thus, national-origin identity creates a sense of community consciousness especially in response to post migration experiences (Grzebik and Raffelli, 2004). Overall, these ethnic identities elucidate the complexity of identities among Latina/o immigrant families and highlight the collective consciousness that may develop as a response to their social, cultural and economic experiences. In addition, it demonstrates agency and empowerment to choose identities that are helpful for their social mobility and integration in the U.S. Therefore, to further examine the contexts of ethnic identities for Latina/o immigrant families, I will explore how assimilation theories address these experiences and ethnic identities.

Assimilation and identity

To examine ethnic identities and assimilation of Latina/o immigrant families in the U.S., I focus on Rumbaut’s (2011) conceptualization that “at the individual level, assimilation denotes the cumulative changes that make individuals of an ethnic group more acculturated, integrated, and identify with the members of another” (6). The U.S. conceptualization of ethnicity may be very different compared to the conceptualization of immigrants’ country of origin. Thus, ethnic identities can reveal how immigrant families understand their place in the U.S. in relation to their parents, or grandparents’ country of origin (Hitlin and Elder, 2007) as well as in relation to the

racial and ethnic stratification system in the U.S. (Tovar and Feliciano 2009). Identification with an ethnic group also means belonging to a group, having a collective consciousness, adhering to their values, norms, and attitudes which in turn affects people's behaviors (Deaux, 2006; Feliciano, 2009; Markus 2010). Deaux (2006) verifies that, "Ethnic identity carries a whole range of meanings and assumptions about one's self definition, about value and importance, social networks and cultural history" (p.99). Therefore, assimilation theory provides a framework to address the ethnic identities of Latinas/os and their integration into ethnic groups in the U.S.

Classical assimilation theory

Numerous perspectives and theories frame the assimilation discourse. Classical assimilation theory, however, is foundational to the historical conceptualization of the experiences of immigrants. Classical assimilation theory is based in the processes in which immigrants are assimilated into mainstream White middle-class culture (Gordon, 1964; Gans, 1992). Gordon's (1964) framework suggests two typologies of assimilation. First, structural assimilation takes place when groups share common social structures, institutions and organizations and hold equal positions. Secondly, cultural assimilation occurs when groups share a common culture and develop common attitudes, values, and lifestyles. These processes of assimilation have been operationalized by focusing on generational status. Generational status refers to whether the individual, their parents, or grandparents were born in or outside the U.S. It is assumed that with each passing generation in the U.S., immigrant families will become more assimilated to White middle-class culture (Gans, 1992). Consequently, the theory suggests that assimilation will culminate in the use of an American identity. However, this theory implies that the assimilation process is a linear and homogenous process for all immigrants and their families living in the U.S. The classical assimilation perspective has implications in understanding the

experiences and ethnic identities of Latinas/os. For one, the theory suggests Anglo-conformity and ends up homogenizing Latina/o immigrant experiences into a fixed similar process which neglects their agency in maintaining their own culture. In addition, the theory disregards the influence of macro-level structures and institutions restricting people's internalization of an American identity. Based on its implications, debates have occurred over the effectiveness of the theory addressing the current experiences of immigrant families (Alba and Nee, 1997; Gans, 1997; Glazer, 1993; Morawska, 1994; Rumbaut, 1997).

Segmented assimilation theory

Segmented assimilation theory improved the discourse of assimilation by addressing the complex processes of integration. Segmented assimilation theory suggests that exogenous factors such as human and financial capital and community and family resources available to immigrant families affect their process of assimilation (Portes and Zhou, 1993). The authors focused on three assimilative outcomes. The first outcome is a path of upward assimilation and mobility suggesting integration into White middle-class culture and values. While Portes and Zhou do not mention identity, I suspect that this outcome would be in conjunction with an American identity. The second outcome is downward assimilation in that contact with poor native minorities suggests assimilation into the norms and values of poor minorities (Portes and Zhou 1993). The low resources and low-wage occupations of immigrants is argued to confine them to poor inner cities and values (Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, and Haller, 2005). Rumbaut (1994) describes this process as assimilating into an oppositional identity of native born minorities. The third possible outcome described by Portes and Zhou (1993) occurs when immigrant families preserve their cultural values and maintain a tight solidarity with their immigrant community and advance

economically. This outcome suggests that children of immigrants would maintain their parents' national origin identity.

However, there are some shortcomings with this theory as it stands. While segmented assimilation provides more assimilative outcomes than classical assimilation, the theory places the success or failure of assimilation on immigrant families and communities. In turn, the use of “downward” suggests a self-defeating role model that stereotypes poor native minorities (Kasinitz, 2002). And yet, many scholars have argued that these values are reflections of the agency to succeed, resist and survive the oppression that characterize many of these poor communities. Furthermore, the segmented assimilation argument seems to disregard how intersecting structural inequalities of race, class and gender impede the opportunities and social mobility of Latina/o immigrant families. In contrast, racialized assimilation theory focuses on the impact of the structural inequality of race.

Racialized assimilation theory

Golash-Boza's (2006) racialized assimilation theory is critical in the assimilation discourse as it reveals the importance of race, phenotype, and discrimination in affecting the process of assimilation in the U.S. The author theorizes that Latinas/os who are of a white phenotype tend to face less discrimination and thus, are more likely to assimilate into White middle-class culture and thus adopt an American identity (Golash-Boza, 2006). Golash-Boza (2006) also hypothesizes that Latinas/os who are perceived to look Hispanic because of their racial or ethnic traits are more likely to develop a hyphenated Latino/a American identity. In addition, she predicts that Black Latinas/os or Latinas/os with a darker phenotype tend to face more racial discrimination and develop an oppositional identity of Black or African-American (Golash-Boza, 2006). Overall, in her study, Golash-Boza (2006) finds that if Latinas/os

experience discrimination and exclusion, then there is a rejection of an American identity and embracement of Latina/o identity. Golash-Boza (2006) exposes an important factor that classical and segmented assimilation theories neglected in that whiteness is a prerequisite for assimilation into the dominant U.S. culture.

While racialized assimilation has added another layer of understanding of Latinas/os experiences and assimilation process, there are two main shortcomings in the conceptualization that Golash-Boza presents. First, in her discussion on the three pathways of assimilation, the author makes it appear that the effects of discrimination and its consequences are based in a racial hierarchy. In turn, she homogenizes the discrimination that white or lighter phenotype Latinas/os may endure and yet they may face discrimination based on their ethnicity, language use, class, gender, citizenship status, or sexuality. In addition, the author places the discrimination that Latinas/os experience in a middle category which also homogenizes the experiences of Latinas/os and disregards other levels of oppression and discrimination that affect Latinas/os. Apart from the homogenization, Golash-Boza's (2006) racialized assimilation theory is still an important theory that reveals how race as a structure of inequality affects the assimilative process for Latina/o immigrant families. And yet, the criticisms I pose in this section give support to the need to develop, an intersectional theory to include the strengths and address the shortcomings of the existing assimilation theories.

Gender and intersectionality

Based on the shortcomings of classical, segmented, and racialized assimilation theory, I suggest —centered on intersectionality from Andersen and Hill Collins (2010) and Baca Zinn et al. (1997) — to incorporate gender and intersectionality in assimilation theory. Gender is a

multidimensional and complex structure that operates at multifaceted levels, organizes our social lives and social relations and shapes all facets of our experiences including our ethnic identities.

In particular, the micro level includes individual agency, social interactions and social relations. Through micro-level interactions, we learn gender norms that socialize us to socially constructed masculine and feminine behaviors and characteristics. The internalization of these gendered norms and characteristics has been suggested to influence ethnic identities. Waters (2001) found that second generation immigrant boys have more freedom than girls but face issues of social exclusion and violent environments shaping their oppositional racial identities. While past research has elucidated that second generation women used hyphenated-American identities to distance themselves from their parents' traditional gender role expectations (Feliciano, 2009). The varying gendered experiences with families and society shapes the formation of ethnic identities. Moreover, these micro-level interactions are affected by macro-level factors.

The other multifaceted component of gender is structural institutions and organizations. Institutions and structures are gendered in that gender is part of their processes, practices, ideologies and power. As a result, these macro-level forces place men and women in differing social, economic and political hierarchies and in result shape our experiences (Andersen, 2006). For instance, during the past couple of decades in the U.S., the economic restructuring and the growth of female-intensive industries (Pessar 1999) consisted of a demand for Latina immigrant labor in the U.S. (Hongagneu-Sotelo and Avila 2003). These structural changes shape the labor experiences of Latinas and Latino men. For example, the demand for Latina labor may place Latinas and Latino men in differing social and economic positions. These differing locations may contribute to perceptions that Latinas are less likely to face labor barriers than Latino men. These

differing perceptions of opportunities may impact the boundaries of inclusion or exclusion in the U.S. and thus, affect the formation of ethnic identities. Consequently, various macro and micro gendered factors shape the meanings attached to different types of identities because of our socialization, the structural factors that shape our opportunities and the treatment by others (Waters, 2001). And yet, the experiences and impact of gender are not homogenous.

Gender is historically, socially and culturally constructed and manifested differently among racial and ethnic groups. Intersectionality acknowledges the examination of these differences. Baca Zinn et al. (1997) elucidates that, “gender is organized and experienced differently when refracted through the prism of sexual, racial/ethnic, social class, physical abilities, age and national citizenship differences” (p.1). Intersectionality is important because it details how race, class, and gender are the foundations for systems of power, privilege, and inequality and structure society as well as our lives (Andersen and Hill Collins 2010). Thus, structures of inequality do not act individually but operate together and influence each other as a matrix of domination. An assimilation theory based in intersectionality suggests a comprehensive analysis of systems of power of gender, race, class, citizenship status, sexuality, age and others which contribute to the experiences of immigrants in the U.S. And yet, gender must be acknowledged and positioned within assimilation theories as a central system of inequality that shapes the experiences and identities of Latina/o immigrant families.

In sum, assimilation theories have largely neglected the impact of gender as a multidimensional structure of inequality that is intersected with other structures of inequality to impact the assimilation of Latino/a immigrant families. As a result, this study goes beyond existing studies by focusing on how gender and intersectional assimilation affects the ethnic identities of Latinos/as from immigrant families. This study addresses two main questions: (1)

are the ethnic identities of Latinos/as from immigrant families shaped by gender and if so, how?

And (2) how do classical, segmented, and racialized assimilative proxies impact the ethnic identities of Latinos/as?

DATA AND METHODS

To examine the influences of gender and intersectionality within the assimilative process, I will analyze the effects of gender on the ethnic identities of Latinas/os. The data for this study comes from the 2004 Immigrant and Intergenerational Mobility Metropolitan Los Angeles (Rumbaut et al., 2004). The data was conducted to examine the mobility of young adult children of immigrants in metropolitan L.A. age twenty to forty years old⁴. To obtain respondents, the researchers conducted a large scale telephone survey⁵ in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura counties which constitute metropolitan L.A.

This data set was chosen for several reasons. First, the survey includes an open-ended question referring to the respondent's ethnic identity. The open-ended question reflects the agency of the respondents in specifying their ethnic identity. Second, past studies that explored the ethnic identities of Latinas/os focus on the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey. The survey only includes second generation individuals and does not provide comparisons with native-born peers (Waldinger and Feliciano, 2004). The IIMMLA data provides the opportunity to compare second generation Latinas/os with third and higher generations. To examine these

⁴ The data includes Asians, Latinas/os, non-Latino whites and non-Latino blacks for a total of 4,655 respondents.

⁵ To conduct the interviews, the researchers used random digital dial sampling. If there were multiple 20-40 year olds within the household, the interviews used the birthday method in that those whose birthday was coming up next would be interviewed. This contributes to the random selection process. Furthermore, the interviews called each household at least six times to try to reach and locate eligible respondents. Once an eligible respondent was identified then the interviewers tried to reach the respondent eight different times. The initial calls were during the weekday from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. and on the weekends from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Callbacks and appointments were made at varying times and days.

differences, I focused on the Latina/o population of the data. This constituted a total sample of 1,572 respondents⁶.

Given the focus on young adult children of immigrants living in the metropolitan Los Angeles, the social and historical context of this city must be examined. Foremost, L.A. is a majority-minority city (Deaux, 2006; Kim, 2008; Rumbaut, 2008) and since World War II became an immigrant destination city (Deaux, 2006) especially given the economic changes within the past couple decades. In the 1990s', LA went through deindustrialization and growth in the service economy (Catanzarite, 2000; Kim 2008). Kim (2008) avows that the service sector offered work to over 2.8 million Asian and Latina/o immigrants who came to Los Angeles during the 1990s'. As a result, in 2007, Los Angeles County had the largest ethnic minority population in the U.S. (Rumbaut, 2008).

Furthermore, California has the largest Latina/o population and specifically has the largest concentration of Mexican immigrants in the U.S. (Diaz and Marcelli, 2007; Tovar and Feliciano, 2009; Vasquez, 2010). Interestingly, Mexicans have a unique historical context in Los Angeles as well as in Southern California because of their historic presence in California which was once part of Mexico. In addition, Latinas/os have also faced many exclusionary proposals, policies, and laws that have been created because of xenophobic views particularly towards Mexicans, undocumented immigrants, and Latina/o immigrants in general. This social and historical context suggests a unique experience for the ethnic identity formation of Latina/o immigrant families in L.A.

⁶ The sample was narrowed to those that responded yes to, "Are you of Latino or Hispanic origin? Such as Mexican-American, Latin American, South American or Spanish-American?" (Rumbaut et al., 2004).

To address the two main research questions, multinomial logistic regression was conducted to examine how proxies of assimilation influence the ethnic identification of young adults living in L.A. I ran two different models. In the first model, gender is the main independent variable. In the second model, gender is used as an interaction variable with parents' nativity to examine if gender differences by parents' nativity affect the use of particular identities. Overall, I hypothesize that Latinas will more likely use hyphenated-American identities while Latino men will more likely adopt national-origin and panethnic identities. Also, the increase in generational status may reflect higher odds of adopting an American or panethnic identity. In addition, an increase in wealth and education may reveal higher odds of selecting an American identity while darker phenotype and enduring discrimination will decrease the odds of selecting an American identity.

Dependent Variable

My main dependent variable is based on the open-ended question of "When thinking about your own ethnicity or ancestry, how do you identify, that is, what do you call yourself?" (Rumbaut et al., 2004). Given that the question is open-ended, I categorized the identities based on Rumbaut's (1994) conceptualization of American identity, panethnic identity (Latina/o or Hispanic), hyphenated-American identity, national origin, and I also included other/multiple identities. The other/multiple category includes identities that were not captured by Rumbaut's categorization. These responses ranged from "human being", "mestizo", "multiracial", and "Irish Mexican". This identity may reflect a denationalized identity, multiple nationalities, or non-institutionalized identity which may signify individual resistance or structural mobility and privilege to reject dominant classifications. Lastly, hyphenated-American, panethnic,

other/multiple and national origin identities are compared to the reference category of American identity.

Independent variables

a) Gender is one of the main independent variables. It is a dichotomous variable and men are the reference group. Instead of labeling this variable sex which is based in biology, I have chosen to use gender because I conceptualize gender as socially constructed multi-dimensional social structure. Unfortunately, given the total sample size and complexity in the analysis, this dichotomous variable is the only variable used to examine the effects of gender. Nonetheless, the use of this variable is not meant to homogenize the experiences of gender but rather reflect a proxy of this social structure.

b) Assimilation variables

Several variables are used to test the validity of classical, segmented and racialized assimilation theory. First, the other main independent variable is generational status. The data focuses on 1.5⁷, second⁸, and third and higher generations. Unfortunately, given data limitations and small sample sizes, generational status has been recoded into a dichotomous variable. I combined respondents who are 1.5 and second generation compared to third and higher generations creating a parents' nativity variable. The reference category contains respondents who have at least one parent that was born outside of the U.S. (77 percent) compared to respondents who have parents that were both born in the U.S.⁹ (23 percent). This variable is

⁷ 1.5 generation means that the person migrated to the United States before they were 12 years old. The mean age of arrival in the U.S. for 1.5 generation in this study is 4.5 years.

⁸ Second generation refers to those born in the U.S. but at least one parent was born outside of the U.S.

⁹ For the rest of the paper, I use third generation to refer to those which both parents were born in the U.S. and includes fourth or higher generations.

capable of examining generational status and serves as one proxy of assimilation. Also, parents' nativity is a unique variable in that most studies examining the ethnic identities of Latinas/os focus on the second generation population (Feliciano, 2009; Portes and MacLeod, 1996; Rumbaut, 1994) or the nativity of the children (Portes and MacLeod, 1996; Rumbaut, 1994).

c) To examine classical assimilation theory, wealth is used as a proxy for social class. In the survey, the respondents were asked if their parents owned or rented their home in the U.S. The variable was coded as a dichotomous variable and the reference group consists of respondents whose parents' rented their home. As in other studies, home ownership is used as an indicator of socioeconomic status, wealth, and mobility in the U.S. (Portes and MacLeod, 1996). Also U.S. homeownership is highly valued within American core values (Diaz McConnell and Marcelli, 2007). Homeownership reveals the socioeconomic status of Latina/o families and conveys opportunities the respondents may or may not have. For example, people with incomes below the poverty line are less likely to own a home. In addition, non-U.S. citizen that do not have proof of residence, social security card or driver's license will face difficulty in applying for loans and establishing credit to buy a home. Moreover, homeownership also examines the effects of segmented assimilation along with educational attainment. Both variables are proxies of socioeconomic status which are influential factors in classical and segmented assimilation theories.

d) Education is measured as a series of five possible continuous outcomes: high school dropout, high school degree, some post-secondary schooling (some college or vocational training), college graduate and graduate degree. Education has also been found to affect identity formation. Studies have found that children of immigrants with a higher education are more likely to choose a national origin identity and hyphenated-American identities because of their

experiences in majority white universities (Feliciano, 2009; Tovar and Feliciano, 2010). These findings are in opposition to segmented assimilation argument which suggests that those with higher socioeconomic status adopt American middle-class culture and identity. The current analysis will provide further evidence supporting either argument.

e) The proxies for racialized assimilation are phenotype and discrimination. Phenotype is measured by the respondents' choice of skin color based on a scale of one (very light) to ten (very dark). Also, discrimination is a dichotomous variable. The reference group refers to respondents whom answered no to, "Within the past year, did you feel as if someone was showing prejudice toward you or was discriminating against you because of your race or ethnicity?" (Rumbaut et al., 2004). These two variables are linked and reveal racialized experiences in that Latinas/os with darker phenotype endure more discrimination and prejudice in the U.S. and are less likely to identify as American (Golash-Boza, 2006; Ono, 2000).

Controls

f) The rest of the control variables¹⁰ are important in that it has been suggested that they affect the process of identity formation for Latino/as in the U.S. Foremost, age has varying effects on identity because of the complex and dynamic nature of identities through our life course. Age is operationalized as a continuous variable. The mean age of the sample is 28 years old which suggests the reflection of experiences of young Latina/o adults. Another control is the dichotomous variable of citizenship. The reference group refers to respondents who are not U.S. citizens. Citizenship reveals the sociopolitical membership status which has been found to affect

¹⁰ Given data limitations and small sample sizes many variables had to be simplified as to not cause small sample size given the interaction of gender and five different categories for ethnic identity.

the formation of identities (Portes and MacLeod, 1996; Rumbaut, 1994). Language has also been found to be connected to ethnic identities in that speaking other languages assist in maintaining national origin or panethnic identities (Deaux, 2006; Portes and MacLeod, 1996; Rumbaut, 1994). Latinas/os that are able to maintain their Spanish language in an English dominant society may address the importance of their ethnicity and culture. In the survey, the respondents were asked, “When you were growing up, did you ever speak a language other than English at home?” (Rumbaut et al. 2004). This question suggests a bilingual socialization. As a result, the reference group is respondents who grew up in English monolingual homes. Lastly, given the context of a large Mexican population in Los Angeles and California, a dummy variable was created to examine the effects of Mexican national origin versus other Latin American national origins. The responses are in conjunction with a question that asked those of Latina/o or Hispanic origin to specify their Latino/a or Hispanic ancestry. The reference group consists of respondents of other Latin American origin (31 percent) compared to respondents of Mexican origin (69 percent) which includes the entire third generation. This control variable suggests how Mexicans identify but also how non-Mexican Latinas/os identify in relation to a large Mexican population.

FINDINGS

Descriptive Results

Percentages for all the variables in the analysis are included in Table 1. Also Figure 1 includes the percentages for the ethnic identities. In the overall sample, 7 percent self-identified as American which interestingly was the least popular identity. The most popular identity in the sample is the panethnic label of Hispanic or Latina/o which was adopted by 44.1 percent of the sample. Also, 15.7 percent endorsed a hyphenated-American identity. Furthermore, 11.6 percent accounted for the other/multiple identity while 21.5 percent selected a national origin identity. The ethnic identities also varied by parents' nativity. Among those with at least one foreign born parent, 5.4 percent selected an American identity and 12.4 percent among the third generation. Panethnic identity continued to be the most popular identity adopted by the respondents regardless of the nativity of parents in that 47.9 percent of those with at least one foreign born parent chose this identity and 31.5 percent among the third generation. Interestingly, 14.5 percent of those with at least one foreign born parent adopted a hyphenated American identity and 19.9 percent of the third generation. The other/multiple identity was declared by 9 percent of those with at least one foreign born parent and accounted for 20.4 percent of the third generation. Lastly, 23.2 percent of those with at least one foreign born parent adopted a national origin identity and the third generation accounted for 15.8 percent.

Gender differences in ethnic identities

Table 2 model 1 shows the odds ratios from the multinomial logistic regression in that gender is the main independent variable. The outcomes in the table include panethnic identity, other/multiple identity, hyphenated-American identity, and national origin identity, as compared to American identity. The other/multiple identity compared to American identity was

insignificant which suggests that gender does not affect the odds of selecting either identity. However, the model found that gender significantly affects the odds of using a panethnic, hyphenated-American, or national origin identity versus an American identity. In the sample, the odds of Latinas adopting a panethnic identity compared to an American identity were two times more likely than Latino men. Also, Latinas were 1.7 times the odds more likely than Latino men to use a hyphenated-American identity in opposition to an American identity. Lastly, the odds of selecting a national origin identity versus an American identity are 1.6 times more likely for Latinas than Latino men. In particular, this finding varies from past research that found that men are more likely to select a national origin identity. However, overall, these findings are consistent with other studies that have found that gender significantly affects the difference in selection of ethnic self-identification.

Parents' nativity difference in ethnic identities

Table 2 also shows the odds ratios from the multinomial logistic regression from model two with parents' nativity as the main independent variable and the interaction with gender. The second model reveals that parents' nativity significantly affects Latinas/os likelihood of adopting a panethnic, hyphenated-American, or national origin identity versus an American identity. As a result, third generation respondents had reduced odds to use a panethnic, hyphenated-American, or national origin identity compared to an American identity. This finding was also found in the first model.

However, the generational differences were insignificant for other/multiple identity. Thus, controlling for gender, assimilative, and identity formation factors does not affect the odds of reporting other/multiple identity in comparison to an American identity. This finding interestingly suggests that Latinas/os regardless of their parents' nativity use agency and select

identities that fit their own ethnic conceptualization. Furthermore, the other/multiple identity suggests that multiethnic or multiracial individuals in the U.S. do not fit the socially constructed and constraining categories that the U.S. Census Bureau has institutionalized.

Effect of the interaction of gender and parents' nativity on ethnic identities

In the second model, there is mixed evidence on the effects of gender on ethnic identities. First, the interaction of gender is insignificant suggesting that the relationship between ethnic identities and parents' nativity is not different by gender. In addition, gender was not significantly different for other/multiple, hyphenated-American, and national origin identities compared to an American identity. However, this model found that Latinas had more than 1.3 times the odds than Latino men to use a panethnic identity compared to an American identity.

Assimilation differences in ethnic identities¹¹

There is also conflicting evidence in the effects of assimilation on ethnic identities. Foremost, in examining classical assimilation as well as segmented assimilation, homeownership was used as a proxy of socioeconomic status. Homeownership has a consistent effect on ethnic identification. If the respondents' parents owned their home in the U.S., then they had greater odds to use an American identity. Home ownership reveals intergenerational mobility which means that as Latina/o immigrant families increase their wealth, they are more likely to select an American identity. This has been found in other studies and suggests some validity for classical and segmented assimilation. However, educational attainment only significantly affected the odds of identifying with a hyphenated American identity versus an American identity. As educational attainment increased, respondents were more likely to adopt a hyphenated-American

¹¹ Given the similarities in the odds ratios and significance levels for the control variables in both models, I have chosen to have one summary of the control variables reflecting the findings from model 2.

identity than an American identity. This is similar to Feliciano's (2009) findings that those with a higher education have a higher probability of using hyphenated identities because of their possible experiences in majority white universities.

In examining racialized assimilation theory, phenotype has a consistently strong effect on ethnic identification. Thus, if a respondents' skin color increases in darkness, then there is a greater odds to choose a panethnic, other/multiple, hyphenated-American, or national origin identity as opposed to an American identity. This means those with darker skin have reduced odds to identify as American. This in turn reflects Golash-Boza's argument that Whiteness is a prerequisite to assimilate to an American identity. However, the variable in reference to discrimination was insignificant and in opposition to the other aspect of Golash-Boza's hypothesis. And yet, this finding may reflect the reliability of the question in that it asked about the respondents' experiences of discrimination within the past year but discrimination can occur throughout our lifetime.

Control variables effects on ethnic identities

Lastly, the control variables also had varied effects on ethnic identities. Age and bilingualism do not significantly predict ethnic identities in this study. This is contradictory to other studies but may suggest that the specific age range of young adults may not allow for an extensive comparison of life course effects. One significant variable is U.S. citizenship. For example, respondents who are U.S. citizens had reduced odds to select a panethnic and national origin identity compared to an American identity. Portes and MacLeod (1996) also found that U.S. citizenship decreased the probability of selecting a panethnic identity. The authors believe that U.S. citizenship suggests that respondents are more acculturated. I also propose that U.S. citizenship can entail more opportunities and life chances than someone who is not an U.S.

citizen or is undocumented. Citizenship is another system of inequality that intersects with race, ethnicity, gender and class to affect the life chances of Latina/o immigrant families. Last of all, Mexican ancestry significantly shapes ethnic identities. The odds of Mexican ancestry respondents to adopt a hyphenated American identity versus an American identity are 7.6 times more likely than those of other Latin American ancestry. The context and visibility of a large Mexican population in Los Angeles contributes to a bi-cultural identity in that both identities and cultures are compatible and integrated (Deaux, 2006). Moreover, the odds of respondents of Mexican ancestry to adopt a Mexican identity versus an American identity are 4.5 times more likely than respondents of other Latin American ancestry. These findings confirms that the context and visibility of a large Mexican native and immigrant population in Los Angeles impacts the ethnic identity formation of individuals of Mexican or other Latin American heritage.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study extends prior work on ethnic identification and assimilation by exploring the effects of gender. Running two different models found contradicting evidence. First, using gender as the main independent variable found greater odds that Latinas are more likely than Latino men to adopt a panethnic, hyphenated-American, or national origin identity compared to an American identity. However, the second model found that the relationship between ethnic identities and generational status were not significantly different by gender. Moreover, both models found that the odds of selecting a panethnic, hyphenated-American, or national origin identity is less likely for third or higher generation Latinas/os compared to those with at least one foreign born parent. This study also found that certain proxies of assimilation influence ethnic identities. For example, I found that respondents whose parents' owned their home had greater odds to select an American identity. In contrast Latinas/os with more education had higher odds to use a hyphenated-American identity than an American identity. In addition, in line with prior research (Golash-Boza, 2006; Golash-Boza and Darity, 2008; Ono 2002), I found that as phenotype darkens, the odds of using a hyphenated-American, panethnic, other/multiple, and national origin identity increases compared to an American identity. Lastly, those of Mexican-origin had greater odds of selecting a Mexican-American or Mexican identity as opposed to an American identity. The historical and social context of L.A., California and large Mexican population provide visibility and support for these identities.

Even though there are conflicting findings on the significance of gender, the findings reveal that gender does impact ethnic identities and the assimilation process. The first model suggests that by focusing on gender, gender significantly influences the odds of Latinas/os selecting ethnic identities. Moreover, even though the interaction of gender is insignificant, it

does not mean that gender is not an important variable that affects the assimilation of Latina/o immigrant families. Phinney's (1990) review of literature on ethnic identities also found that there are no firm conclusions about gender differences. While there are also no firm conclusions from my study, the study still suggests that gender impacts ethnic identities and assimilative processes. Furthermore, as explained earlier, gender is a multi-dimensional structure of inequality which has macro and micro level affects that intersects with other systems of inequality such as race, ethnicity, class, citizenship, sexuality, age, and others, impacting the gendered experiences of Latinas/os. As a result, gender is diffused with other structural factors which suggest that its influences may be obscured and conflated. The findings in turn suggest that more research is needed to explore the complex effects of gender on ethnic identities and assimilation processes.

These findings also have implications for assimilation theories. The findings are conflicting on the effects of varying assimilative processes. Foremost, parents' nativity which is a proxy of generational status and cultural assimilation reveals that third or higher generation Latinas/os had reduced odds of selecting a panethnic, hyphenated-American, or national origin identity compared to an American identity. However, varying proxies of assimilation influence the odds of using an American identity. For example, parent's homeownership reveals that once Latinas/os are accumulating wealth, they are subscribing to an American identity. This suggests access to structural opportunities as well as social mobility which are proposed by classical and segmented assimilation. However, educational attainment, a proxy of classical, structural and segmented assimilation reveals that those with higher educational attainment have greater odds to select a hyphenated-American identity than an American identity. Thus, integration and success in higher educational institutions means Latina/os are more likely to reject an American

identity. Thus, educational experiences influence ethnic identities in differing way than conceptualized by segmented assimilation. In particular, socioeconomic mobility has differing effects on assimilative processes and does not necessarily imply assimilation into an American identity.

Another factor that affects the assimilative processes as was suggested by Golash-Boza's racialized assimilation theory is phenotype. An increase in darkness of phenotype suggests higher odds of Latinas/os adopting a panethnic, other/multiple, hyphenated-American, or national origin identity versus an American identity. Even though discrimination was insignificant, this finding suggests that Latinas/os may feel excluded from an American identity because of racial experiences. Racialization is a significant process that affects the assimilative process and integration into U.S. society. For example, while third and higher generations had increased odds to use an American identity, panethnic identity has the highest percentage of ethnic identities adopted by third or higher generation Latinas/os. This suggests that while racial minorities have internalized American culture, they are still hindered from the opportunities and privileges that White Americans have in using an American identity (Bashi and McDaniel, 1997). Furthermore, Golash-Boza and Darity (2008) state that if panethnicity is merely an ethnic identifier, then it would dissipate over time. The prevalence of the panethnic identity suggests that the identity has also become a racialized ethnic label and racial minority status. Thus, Latinas/os are also experiencing racialization which is the process of extension of racial meanings to a racially unclassified group which impacts their identity formation. And yet, studies have also found that the panethnic identity, especially for smaller national origin groups, emphasizes commonality, inclusiveness, and group solidarity (Feliciano, 2009; Portes and

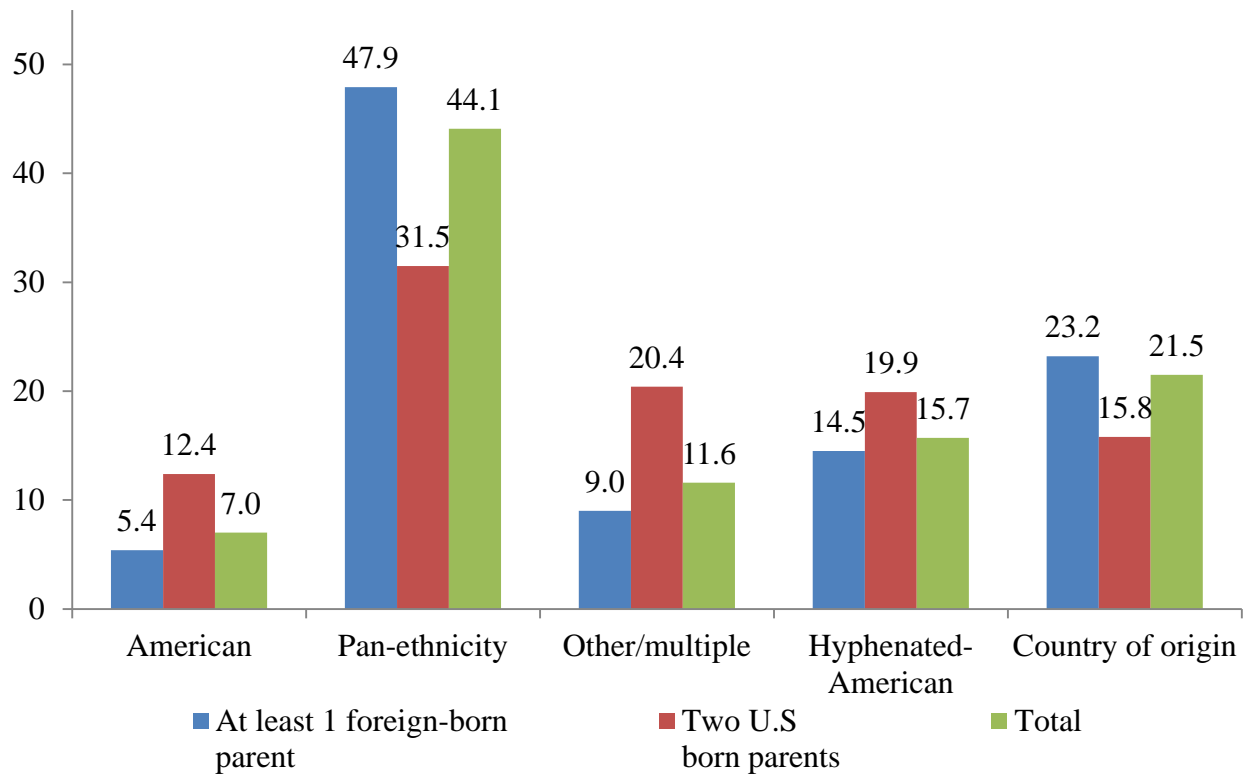
MacLeod, 1996). While Rumbaut (1994) views this identity as a U.S.-made identity, the identity may reflect these varying complex experiences.

However, there are a couple limitations in the study. First, ethnic identities are optional and are individual choices depending on a particular time and place. Studies have found that self-identities are complex and constantly changing in different contexts and at different life stages (Hitlin et al., 2007; Markus, 2010). The respondents in the study chose their ethnic identities in relation to the surveyor and the context of a research study. These identities are subject to change and must be acknowledged as dynamic and fluid. Another, limitation is that the sample size did not allow for an extensive exploration of gendered factors that may influence ethnic identities and the assimilative process. Donato et al. (2006) affirms that bivariate analysis that compare men versus women are inadequate in revealing the effects of gender. Consequently, there is a need for more studies to examine the effect of gender within the assimilation process. However, gender must be examined in relation to race, ethnicity, class, generation, age, and other axes of differentiation that intersect to affect the lives of Latinas/os (Mahler and Pessar, 2006; Smith and Mannon, 2010).

Overall, Latinas/os do not all experience the same processes of assimilation in the U.S. but rather the assimilation process is dynamic, complex and affected by varying factors. It must be taken into account that some Latinas/os will identify as American, others panethnic, or other/multiple, hyphenated American, or national origin identity. In addition, the social and historical contexts are important factors suggested by the findings that affect the differing processes of assimilation. For example, parents' social location, family socialization, and the context of metropolitan city impacted ethnic identities. As a result, the findings suggest that Latina/o immigrant families' ethnic identity formation is complex and dynamic because of their

geographical location and social location within structures of inequality of gender, race, ethnicity, class, citizenship, education, and age. Hence, intersectional assimilation theory provides a framework to examine the effects of gender on the lives of Latina/o immigrant families as well as to examine the various intersecting macro and micro level forces that impact the assimilative processes and ethnic identities of Latinas/os immigrant families.

Figure 1: Percentages of ethnic identities by parents' nativity



*For interpretation of the references to color in this and all other figures, the reader is referred to the electronic version of this thesis.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of selected variables for ethnic identities

	<u>Percentage</u>
Ethnic identities	
American identity	7
Hyphenated-American identity	15.7
Pan-ethnic identity	44.1
Other/multiple identity	11.6
National origin identity	21.5
Sex	
Female	50.3
Male	49.8
Parents' nativity	
At least 1 foreign born parent	77.0
Third generation	23.0
Parents home ownership	
Own home	64.6
Rent	35.5
Educational attainment	
Drop out of high school	8.72
High School Diploma	27.6
Some college	42.1
College graduate and more	21.6
Phenotype*	4.54
Discrimination	
Yes	33.1
No	66.9
Age*	28.3
Citizenship status	
U.S. citizen	86.5
Non-U.S. citizen	13.5
Bilingualism	
Spoke language other than English at home	76.7
Only spoke English at home	23.4
Nationality	
Mexican	68.8
Other Latin American national origin	31.2

*Represents the mean of the variable

Table 2: Relative risk ratio of gender and interaction of parents' nativity and gender on ethnic identities

	Pan-ethnicity		Hyphenated-American	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Gender				
Latinas	2.000* (0.428)	2.014* (0.550)	1.719* (0.417)	1.636 (0.499)
Parents' nativity				
Third generation	0.362* (0.120)	0.407* (0.157)	0.434* (0.155)	0.404* (0.170)
Parents' nativity*gender		0.808 (0.363)		1.158 (0.572)
Parents owned home				
Yes	0.451* (0.125)	0.450* (0.124)	0.463* (0.141)	0.463* (0.141)
Educational attainment	0.972 (0.124)	0.972 (0.125)	1.366* (0.196)	1.365* (0.196)
Phenotype	1.218* (0.071)	1.217* (0.071)	1.249* (0.081)	1.250* (0.081)
Discrimination				
Yes	0.933 (0.221)	0.935 (0.222)	1.333 (0.345)	1.331 (0.345)
Age	1.001 (0.018)	1.001 (0.018)	1.000 (0.020)	1.000 (0.020)
Citizenship status				
U.S. citizen	0.156* (0.115)	0.155* (0.114)	0.835 (0.693)	0.839 (0.696)
Bilingualism	1.484 (0.438)	1.474 (0.435)	1.796 (0.595)	1.801 (0.600)
Nationality				
Mexican	1.489 (0.409)	1.485 (0.408)	7.641* (2.509)	7.615* (2.501)

* p < 0.5

Table 2 (cont'd) : Relative risk ratio of gender and interaction of parents' nativity and gender on ethnic identities

	Other/multiple		Country of origin	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Gender				
Latinas	1.251 (0.317)	1.163 (0.378)	1.618* (0.380)	1.528 (0.443)
Parents' nativity				
Third generation	0.953 (0.360)	0.881 (0.383)	0.305* (0.109)	0.263* (0.111)
Parents' nativity*gender		1.200 (0.603)		1.334 (0.668)
Parents owned home				
Yes	0.348* (0.107)	0.348* (0.107)	0.449* (0.131)	0.450* (0.131)
Educational attainment	1.081 (0.161)	1.081 (0.161)	0.933 (0.128)	0.932 (0.128)
Phenotype	1.224* (0.083)	1.225* (0.083)	1.190* (0.074)	1.191* (0.074)
Discrimination				
Yes	1.455 (0.389)	1.456 (0.389)	1.349 (0.339)	1.350 (0.340)
Age	0.976 (0.020)	0.976 (0.020)	0.962 (0.018)	0.963 (0.018)
Citizenship status				
U.S. citizen	0.493 (0.396)	0.498 (0.400)	0.149* (0.111)	0.150* (0.112)
Bilingualism	1.137 (0.385)	1.142 (0.388)	1.805 (0.587)	1.817 (0.592)
Nationality				
Mexican	1.608 (0.523)	1.605 (0.521)	4.510* (1.339)	4.503* (1.337)

* p < 0.5

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